CLAIMS

We claim:

1.   In a rights management system for protecting messages from unauthorized access, a method of providing an entity the ability to enforce conditions under which the entity's message server will accept messages, the method comprising acts of:

receiving data including a message with a protected portion, a publishing license and a message server use license, the protected portion of the message controlled by a rights management server, the publishing license defining one or more principals' rights to the protected portion of the message, and the message server use license an encrypted key that corresponds to an entity's message server;

using the message server use license to access the protected portion of the message for performing operations on the protected portion in accordance with message policies defined by the entity; and

making the message and the publishing license available to the one or more principals when the protected portion of the message conforms to the message policies defined by the entity.

2.   The method of claim 1, wherein the message policies are chosen from one or more of an anti-virus scanning, an anti-spam scanning and search term indexing.

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3. The method of claim 2, wherein the protected portion of the message is at least one of a protected contact, protected document, protected attachment, protected calendar item or protected meeting request.

4. The method of claim 2, wherein the operations are performed by a sending entity's server before sending the message and the publishing license to a partner entity.

5. The method of claim 2, wherein the operations are performed by a partner entity's server when receiving the message from a sending entity.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the message server use license includes the rights available to the partner entity's server.

7. The method of claim 5, further comprising the acts of:

receiving the sending entity's message policy, which defines the type of operations that the partner entity can perform on the protected portion of the message;

receiving the partner entity's message policy, which defines the type of operations that are to be performed on the message before the partner entity's message server can accept the message;

comparing the sending entity's message policy with the partner entity's message policy; and

based on the comparison, determining if the policies are compatible before accepting the message and the publishing license from the sending entity.

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8. The method of claim 7, wherein the partner entity receives the sending entity's message policies from a directory service.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the format of the received sending entity's message policies is XrML.

10. The method of claim 8, wherein the directory services is one of a DNS, Active Directory, LDAP, XKMS, or UDDI.

11. The method of claim 7, wherein the sending entity receives the partner entity's message policies from the partner entity over a SMTP connection.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein the one or more principals are a process, user, machine, server or client.

13. In a rights management system for protecting message from unauthorized access, a method of providing an entity the ability to enforce conditions under which the entity's message server will accept messages by generating a message server use license, the method comprising acts of:

receiving a request for a message server use license that identifies an entity's message server;

receiving a key that allows access to a protected portion of a message controlled by a rights management server;

encrypting the key to correspond with the entity's message server; and

generating a message server use license that includes the encrypted key for allowing the entity's message server access to the protected portion of the message when performing operations on the message in accordance with message policies defined by the entity.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the message policies are chosen from one or more of an anti-virus scanning, an anti-spam scanning and search term indexing.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein the protected portion of the message is at least one of a protected contact, protected document, protected attachment, protected calendar item or protected meeting request.

16. The method of claim 14, wherein the request is made by a sending entity's message server.

17.   The method of claim 16, wherein the entity is the sending entity.

18.   The method of claim 16, wherein the entity is a partner entity, which the sending entity's server sends the message and a publishing license to, the publishing license defining one or more principals' rights to the protected portion of the message, and the request for the message server use license includes a digital certificate issued to the partner entity for identifying the partner entity's server.

19.   The method of claim 18, wherein the one or more principals are a process, user, machine, server or client.

20. At a sending entity's message server within a rights management system for protecting message from unauthorized access, a computer program product comprising one or more computer readable media carrying computer executable instructions that implement a method of providing an entity the ability to enforce conditions under which the entity's message server will accept messages, the method comprising acts of:

receiving a message with a protected portion being controlled by a rights management server;

receiving a publishing license that includes rights available to one or more intended principals, the rights controlling the type of operations that can be performed on the protected portion of the message;

receiving message policies defined by an entity, which specify operations that are to be performed the message;

requesting a message server use license to allow the entity's message server access to the protected portion of the message;

receiving the requested message server use license, the requested message server use license including an encrypted key that corresponds to the entity's message server; and

making the message, publishing license and message server use license available to the entity's message server such that the entity's message server can enforce the message policies defined by the entity.

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21.   The computer program product of claim 20, wherein the message policies are chosen from one or more of a anti-virus scanning, an anti-spam scanning and search term indexing.

22.   The computer program product of claim 21, wherein the protected portion of the message is at least one of a protected contact, protected document, protected attachment, protected calendar item or protected meeting request.

23.   The computer program product of claim 21, wherein the operations are performed by the sending entity's server before sending the message and the publishing license to a partner entity.

24.   The computer program product of claim 23, further comprising the acts of:

receiving the sending entity's message policy, which defines the type of operations that the partner entity is allowed to performed on the protected portion of the message;

receiving the partner entity's message policy, which defines the type of operations that are to be performed on the message before the partner entity's message server can accept the message;

comparing the sending entity's message policy with the partner entity's message policy; and

based on the comparison, determining if the policies are compatible before sending the message and the publishing license to the partner entity.

25.   The computer program product of claim 24, wherein the sending entity receives the partner entity's message policies from a directory service.

26.   The computer program product of claim 25, wherein the format of the received partner entity's message policies is XrML.

27.   The computer program product of claim 25, wherein the directory services is one of a DNS, Active Directory, LDAP, XKMS, or UDDI.

28.   The computer program product of claim 24, wherein the sending entity receives the partner entity's message policies from the partner entity over a SMTP connection.

29.   The computer program product of claim 22, wherein the operations are performed by a partner entity's server when receiving the message from the sending entity.

30.   The computer program product of claim 23, wherein the one or more intended principals are a process, user, machine, server or client.

31.   In a rights management system for protecting messages transferred between two trusted entities from unauthorized access, a method of determining if the messages can be transferred based on each others message policies, the method comprising acts of:

receiving a sending entity's message policy, which defines the type of operations that a partner entity is allowed to perform on a protected portion of a message;

receiving the partner entity's message policy, which defines the type of operations that are to be performed on the message before the partner entity's message server can accept the message;

comparing the sending entity's message policy with the partner entity's message policy; and

based on the comparison, determining if the policies are compatible for transferring the message between the sending and partner entities' message servers.

32.   The method of claim 31, wherein the message policies are chosen from one or more of an anti-virus scanning, an anti-spam scanning and search term indexing.

33.   The method of claim 32, wherein the policies are received and compared at the sending entity's server for determining if the message should be transferred from the sending entity's server to the partner entity's message sever.

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34.   The method of claim 32, wherein the policies are received and compared at the partner entity's server for determining if the message should be accepted when transferred from the sending entity's server to the partner entity's message sever.

35.   The method of claim 32, wherein the sending entity receives the partner entity's message policies from a directory service.

36.   The method of claim 35, wherein the format of the received partner entity's message policies is XrML.

37.   The method of claim 35, wherein the directory services is one of a DNS, Active Directory, LDAP, XKMS, or UDDI.

38.   The method of claim 32, wherein the sending entity receives the partner entity's message policies from the partner entity over a SMTP connection.